

Guidelines to Address Graduate Student Concerns Related to the Research Ramp-Up

In this unprecedented situation, the health and well-being of students, researchers, staff and faculty – and their families – are of paramount importance to the University. In addition to being “in this together,” we also need to support each other in both our work and non-work challenges. As we think about returning to campus for research, it should be evident that PIs and students alike cannot necessarily accelerate research to compensate for reduced research productivity over the last 5 months. We must adapt research plans and expectations to account for risks to individuals, their families and those with whom they live. We expect PIs and Major Professors to help students continue to make progress in their research, but to adjust expectations and reduce the stress and uncertainty that students feel.

Graduate students and postdocs: Whom do I contact with questions or concerns about returning to campus for research?

Some students, or those with whom they live, may have medical issues that make them more vulnerable to COVID-19 or other COVID-19 related concerns requiring them to avoid working in-person to minimize the risk of infection.

If you as a graduate student have concerns about returning to in-person research, please follow the steps below. As you think about your situation, talk with other students about how they feel doing research in-person. Conversations with peers can be a source of comfort, perspective, and good ideas about how to work safely. Also consider reaching out to [Counseling Services](#).

Step 1: Talk with your PI, Major Professor or supervisor and try to come to an understanding of each party’s concerns and find a good faith compromise in which both parties are satisfied.

Step 2: If you and your PI or Major Professor cannot come to an agreement, meet together with the department/program chair who will be aware of practices in other labs or research groups and what range of accommodations have been implemented. Ideally, this will lead to a mutually agreeable outcome.

Step 3: If any party feels an independent mediator outside of the department is necessary, they should contact either of the Associate Deans at Graduate Studies: Duncan Temple Lang dtemplelang@ucdavis.edu and Ellen Hartigan-O’Connor eoconnor@ucdavis.edu. Graduate Studies will work with the student, PI and the graduate program’s Lead Dean, Office of Student Support and Judicial Affairs, and the Office of Research and its Research Ramp up/down workgroup.

Should you believe the issue gives rise to a discrimination-related concern, you may also use the standard reporting procedures at the [Harassment & Discrimination Assistance and Prevention Program](#), [Title IX Office](#), or contact the [ADA Coordination Officer](#).

Graduate students and postdocs who have questions or concerns about returning to campus for research should be able to raise those questions or concerns without fear of retaliation. If you believe you are experiencing retaliation, contact Graduate Studies and/or the [Chief Compliance Officer](#).

It is also important to consider alternative approaches to research or even new research projects rather than being tied to pre-COVID plans. Some faculty and students have been very creative in considering alternative ways to collect data, do the same or similar research, or pivot to new projects and learning new research skills that will benefit them in their careers. Some faculty,

students and programs are considering plans to have informal meetings to share ideas about ways to adapt research. Please contact Graduate Studies if you are interested in connecting with others.

If a Major Professor and student disagree about returning to the lab or making progress in research, it is important to clarify if and how the relationship will move forward, or if the program needs to help the student identify potential new mentors.

The relationship between a student and a PI or Major Professor is further complicated by different funding arrangements and the overlap between “work” and research course credits. We expect students and PIs to work together in good faith to accommodate each other’s situations and needs.

Whom do I contact if I have concerns about compliance with health & safety mitigation measures in my research laboratory?

You have the right to report any health & safety concern through the proper channels, and UCD takes all of these reports very seriously. Begin by speaking with your PI or supervisor about your concerns. If you observe that appropriate action is not taken, take your concerns directly to the department chair who should follow up with the PI and report to the appropriate Dean. If you would prefer to do this confidentially, you can contact the Office of Research.

Anonymous reports may be made to the Whistleblower Hotline: (800) 403-4744 or [universityofcalifornia.edu/hotline](https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/hotline).